

Strategy Research Project

Redesigning the Army's Individual Mobilization Augmentee Program

by

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Abstract

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The Army's Individual Mobilization Augmentee Program (IMA) supports active component units with trained, specialized Soldiers in unique career broadening and joint assignments not found in troop program units. Currently, this program lacks effective, unified leadership leaving IMA Soldiers without clear career guidance, leading to a program that is under-filled and under-utilized. This paper explores this IMA program from its origins, links to the national strategic vision, and current status of the Army's IMA program in contrast to other services and recommends courses of action for program redesign and policy, funding, and management changes. IMA program issues are symptoms that the vision of an operational reserve has not been cemented into the culture of the Army. Clear management and measurement efforts will foster cultural change. A fully utilized and valued IMA program is a measure of progress in the culture. Other topics that enhance this culture change present opportunities for future research. Enhancing interoperability between active and reserve components will inculcate the vision of an operational reserve force into the culture necessary for a ready force of the future.

Redesigning the Army's Individual Mobilization Augmentee Program

Strategic Significance of the IMA Program

The Army's Individual Mobilization Augmentee Program (IMA) supports active component units with trained, specialized Soldiers in unique career broadening and joint assignments not found in troop program units. These broadening and joint assignments are necessary to sustain an operational reserve force. Currently, this program lacks effective, unified leadership leaving IMA Soldiers without clear career guidance, leading to a program that is under-filled and under-utilized. This paper explores the IMA program from its origins, links to the strategic vision, and current status of the Army's IMA program in contrast to other services and recommends courses of action for program redesign and policy, funding, and management changes. IMA program issues are symptoms that the vision of an operational reserve has not been cemented into the culture of the Army. Clear management and measurement efforts will foster cultural change. A fully utilized and valued IMA program is a measure of progress in the Army's culture toward embracing an operational reserve. Other areas that may help implement this culture change present opportunities for future research. Enhancing interoperability between active and reserve components will inculcate the vision of an operational reserve force into the culture necessary for a ready force of the future.

Throughout history, the United States military has been challenged with how to downsize after major wars and conflicts without compromising readiness. Again, the U.S. is faced with this challenge. After over 11 years of combat, two major wars are drawing to a close. With large budget deficits, the country looks to reduce the military footprint for fiscal conservancy while maintaining an agile and adaptable force.

The demands of two long wars changed the Army's employment of the Reserve Components (RC) from a strategic force of last resort into an integral part of the operational force. The RC has been able to match combatant commanders' operational requirements in a seamless rotation with active component (AC) forces. As the nation gears down and looks for efficient and fiscally prudent ways to maintain readiness, the RC must continue to be fully integrated into an operational rotation with AC forces to maintain readiness and be good stewards of the nation's defense resources. Some recent reviews have demonstrated that RC units cost 25-35% of AC units and have an overall lifecycle cost including retirement and healthcare of 33% of AC forces.¹ RC costs are in proportion to their use; therefore, a larger amount of reserve forces in a Train-Ready force pool structure costs one quarter to one third of the active component in a per Soldier basis yet adds increased operational depth.²

An operational reserve force provides a flexible fiscally prudent way to accomplish our national defense goals, but RC readiness is imperative. Reserve officers need to be held to the same standards as their AC peers and be required to obtain the same joint experiences, education, and qualifications which are essential for the effective employment of an operational reserve.³ These career broadening assignments include challenging staff roles at geographic and functional commands in all theaters and non-combat joint qualifying positions.

In the Army Reserve, these career broadening and joint assignments are found almost exclusively in the IMA program. This program has 4,000 authorized positions for mid grade and senior grade Soldiers in an RC with an end strength of 205,000. Even though these positions represent less than 2% of the overall RC forces, 46% remain

unfilled and those positions that are filled are not proactively managed and rotated in accordance with regulations.⁴ This suggests a disconnect between the amount of Soldiers who need these experiences in the IMA program and those who are utilizing this opportunity.

The IMA program is essential to maintaining an operational reserve.⁵ The IMA program provides RC assignments that interface and augment the AC. This is vital to not only cultivating an interoperable force, but growing a relationship between the components. Challenges within the IMA program are symptoms that point to larger cultural barriers that still exist. Underutilization of these developmental assignments illuminates the fact that the Army has not inculcated the vision of a fully operational, interoperable reserve force into the culture of the Army. Efforts to emphasize and measure elements of the cultural climate of an operational reserve will also facilitate improvements in the IMA program. A fully utilized IMA program is an intermediate measure of this cultural change. Other elements such as Total Force Policy and Soldier for Life initiatives are also intermediate measures of the operational reserve vision anchoring in the military culture and present potential topics for future research.

Literature Review

Strategic Alignment

The existence of the IMA program has never been more relevant than it is today. The IMA program and its concepts align directly with the *National Security Strategy*, *National Military Strategy*, and *Army Doctrine Publication 1*.⁶ Even with this alignment, the Army's IMA program still yields gaps in its utilization and processes that other branches of service have addressed. These efforts offer potential opportunities for the Army's IMA program for further strategic alignment.

The *National Security Strategy (NSS)* describes the executive office's broad spectrum concept for addressing the nation's major national and international security concerns.⁷ The *NSS* calls for sustainable deployment cycles and the preservation and long-term viability of our force through successful recruitment and sustainment.⁸ Utilizing IMAs to augment active component forces is one method to achieve high quality, long-term viability of sustainable deployments in a fiscally prudent manner. The program also provides opportunities to retain well trained Soldiers exiting the AC in unique, flexible positions within the RC in a more part-time role.

The *National Military Strategy (NMS)*, produced by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, details the ends, ways, and means for using the military for security of the nation and calls for affordable ways to provide full spectrum capabilities.⁹ By employing an operational reserve force for more routine deployments, the U.S. can exercise fiscal prudence by maintain a world presence with a smaller active force. The *NMS* also further delineates the RC as essential in providing strategic and operational depth to a joint force, necessitating continued training, equipping, and manning for routine, predictable deployments.¹⁰

Since the majority of Army Reserve positions are found in troop program units (TPU) which are tactical units without joint assignments, the IMA provides most of the Army Reserve opportunities for joint assignments.¹¹ The expectation that the RC will continue to be able to perform interchangeably with equivalent AC forces is forged in the *NMS*. For this reason, the RC needs the opportunities for exposure to the equivalent positions and training as the AC, and these opportunities are available in the IMA program. As a force structure with the same standards of education, qualifications and

experiences is emphasized, these assignments will be imperative for our junior leaders to have as they progress and lead RC of the future.

The joint environment continues to be emphasized in the *Army Doctrine Publication 1*.¹² It notes that the integration of Army forces within the joint force has never been greater and that reserve components are an integral part of that operational force.¹³ It also addresses the fact that the ability of the Army to rapidly expand to meet unexpected contingencies lies with a strong cadre of noncommissioned and mid grade officers.¹⁴ The majority of the positions (74%) in the Army IMA program exist for these midgrade Soldiers.¹⁵ In addition, mid-career is the expected timeframe on a career glide path where broadening assignments are expected.¹⁶ These concepts align with the *NMS* and fully support a robust IMA program.

The IMA Program

The IMA program dates back over 30 years. In 1980, the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force (RDJTF) was established as part of President Carter's security strategy in the Persian Gulf. It soon became clear that reserves would be required for key elements of this Rapid Deployment Force.¹⁷ This realization created the impetus for *Public Law 96-584*, allowing the president to mobilize up to 100,000 members of the Selected Reserve without a declaration of war, and in 1981, the inception of the IMA program.¹⁸ The new IMA program members were included as part of the Selected Reserve and, therefore, eligible for this new call-up authority.

The Individual Mobilization Augmentee program exists in all services of the military and the objective of the IMA program is unified for all services. Its purpose is to facilitate the rapid expansion of the active force structure to meet military manpower requirements.¹⁹ The current policies that direct the IMA program establish the framework

required for a strong IMA program. The *Department of Defense (DoD) Instruction Number 1235.11* provides the overall instruction for the services program development.

It defines IMAs as

an individual member of the Selected Reserve assigned to a Reserve Component (RC) billet in an active component or non-DoD organization. IMAs are trained individuals pre-assigned to billets that must be filled to support mobilization (pre and/or post mobilization) requirements, contingency operations, operations other than war, or other specialized or technical requirements.²⁰

The Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, reviews the Combatant Commanders requirements for IMAs, prioritizes and submits them to the Service Secretaries of the Military departments for sourcing.²¹ The purpose of the IMA is to augment AC mobilization authorizations; therefore, the policy states that IMAs shall not be assigned to RC force structures, delineates that IMAs shall perform a minimum for 12 days of annual training a year, and specifies that IMAs can be formed into IMA detachments for ease of management.²² Although these concepts apply to the IMA program in all services, these basic elements need to be considered in exploring improvements and re-design of the Army IMA program.

Current Army policy on the IMA program establishes the policies and procedures for the employment, utilization, and management of the IMA program within the Army.²³ This regulation designates the Chief, Army Reserve (CAR) as the appropriations director for the program, responsible for planning and budgeting for the IMA requirements.²⁴ Currently, there are 4,000 authorized IMA positions spanning all of the combatant commands and other functional areas.²⁵ With the CAR's oversight, the Office of the Chief, Army Reserve and Human Resources Command (HRC) together screen, identify, and assign qualified Soldiers to IMA positions.²⁶ The Commander of HRC is the

functional manager of the IMA program, responsible for the assignments and personnel management of the IMAs, though.²⁷ Having these two diverse entities with shared responsibility for the IMA program creates conflict and confusion in the program and complicates the ability to have a clear unity of command to drive a successful program. Besides the mandatory 12 day annual training, IMAs can also perform up to 48 inactive duty training periods as funding permits. This status is called a Drilling Individual Mobilization Augmentee (DIMA). For purposes of this paper, both statuses, IMA and DIMA, will be referred to as IMA.

The HRC *Drilling Individual Augmentee Handbook* describes the HRC IMA Program Manager responsibilities for the daily maintenance of the program in detail.²⁸ It also clarifies the vast responsibilities of the IMA to self-manage their career. It is incumbent on the soldier to remind HRC when they are due specific reserve component awards – functions usually done by a personnel section for a Soldier in a traditional unit. It also requires the individual Soldier to assure all documentation such as physical training records, medical readiness updates, evaluations, and documentation of duty get to HRC timely.

Numerous defense leaders have articulated a strategic vision of the military that supports an operational reserve force. The IMA program provides the operational linkage to fulfilling this vision. It holds the key positions to develop this interoperability between the AC and RC, and has the unique career broadening assignments necessary for the RC to be prepared for this interoperability, but fundamental opportunities to improve the management of the program exist. The IMA program also offers individual billets where they are most needed. It provides an alternative to units as being the only

solution to meeting mission requirements and, therefore, are a source of targeted solutions that are inherently efficient.

IMA Program Challenges

Although the IMA program holds unique career broadening assignments necessary to be able to mirror a career glide path similar to the active component, evidence demonstrates that there are opportunities to improve the administration for the program. Because this program of 4,000 positions is overseen by one program manager at with decentralized position management throughout the Enlisted Personnel (EPD) and Officer Personnel Divisions (OPD) at HRC, the program lacks a unified leadership emphasis. This lack of program leadership is evident when exploring the force structure in the IMA program. As noted, the IMA force structure has an authorized strength of less than 2% of the overall RC end strength and is smaller than other service components. The Air Force currently has 13,000 allotted IMA positions which are 18% of their 70,500 authorized Reserve positions.²⁹ Even with the Army's IMA small number and overall percentage, the fill rate is only 54% compared to almost completely filled Air Force IMA billets.³⁰ These unfilled slots in the Army IMA program are found mostly in the ranks of O4 to O5, W4 to W5, and E5 to E7.³¹ Medical military occupational specialties (MOSs) are the most prevalent at almost 29% but the second most common category of MOSs are non-specific, totaling 9% of the overall vacancies.³² Positions are spread over a all major commands but vacancies are most prevalent in Joint /OSD and HQDA (23% of the overall vacancies).³³

The exact number of vacancies is unknown, however, because the vacancy database is not proactively managed. This research found discrepancies in the vacancy roster that Soldiers are asked to use to find IMA opportunities. As of December 1, 2012,

there were 2176 vacant positions listed on the HRC website; yet, the reported fill rate for the 4,000 IMA positions was 54%. This demonstrated a mismatch of 336 positions. In exploring this through individually investigating each position, proponent agencies reported that 221 of these advertised vacancies were longer valid positions. Proponent agency representatives stated that these positions were eliminated, converted to a different category, or filled. In addition, proponent agencies reported that another 218 positions were in an unknown status, meaning that they had no visibility whether they were filled, deleted, or vacant. This ambiguity creates additional challenges for Soldiers seeking these potential career opportunities and presents further challenges to filling correct billets. Soldiers are expected to use these self-service tools to find available positions, but these errors reflect a lack of program management and can discourage good Soldiers from seeking these opportunities.

Filled billets also have unique issues as well. Of those positions filled, 175 have been there over 5 years, clearly beyond the specifications of AR 140-145. This guidance is also in line with other service guidance such as Marine Corps Order 1001.62A.³⁴ In discussing this problem with HRC, the proponent positioned that, because there are so many unfilled slots, they do not perceive this as a term limit and do not focus on this aspect.³⁵ Although vacancies are an issue, by not managing the rotation of the positions, Soldiers are not progressing in their career development, and opportunities for others to assume these career broadening positions is not being afforded.

The IMA program must be redesigned for enhanced administration and management to capitalize on the opportunities in the IMA program, offer career

broadening assignments to the best up and coming Army Reserve leaders, and enhance the seamless operational exchange between the Active and Reserve components. LTG Jeffrey Talley, Chief Army Reserve and Commanding General, U.S. Army Reserve Command (USARC), has also articulated his goals to “reduce administrative assignment barriers, increase the assignment rate of IMA Soldiers [and] enhance career broadening opportunities.”³⁶ Considering the data, senior guidance, and strategic vision, emphasis must be placed on these unique positions to grow an RC force structure with equivalent training and assignment experience as their AC counterparts. This research provides a comprehensive look at the entire program from recruitment and selection to sustainment and rotation and identifies policy and structural changes to align the program with the strategic vision of the military.

Program Gaps and Recommendations for Change

Discrepancies noted in the program offer opportunities for improvement. Challenges are evident in all aspects of the IMA program and can be categorized into three groups: recruitment, selection, and sustainment and rotation. Fortunately, since the IMA program exists in all branches of the military, other services have already experienced many of these challenges and offer potential solutions to the circumstances the Army is facing. Although there are some specific modifications that can be made to improve the program, the Army must address two main issues to definitively change it— accountability for the program from recruitment to rotation and communication to the field about the program and its availabilities.

Recruitment

The IMA offers unique opportunities in career broadening assignments and flexibility in training, so it should not be difficult to fill with talented Soldiers; yet, as noted

above, there are over 1,400 unfilled IMA positions. For the RC to be operationally interchangeable with AC forces, Soldiers will need to have these career experiences and educational opportunities. In addition, the majority, some 75%, of the positions available in the IMA requires the ranks of MAJ to LTC and SSG to MSG at the mid-career timeframe for broadening assignments, but these are also the grades that have the lowest percentage of fill.³⁷ Although *AR 140-145* states that IMA recruiting efforts to meet the budgeted annual IMA end strength is the role of HRC, this lack of filled positions demonstrates that changes to these efforts are needed.

The IMA program should target recruitment efforts to key groups. As the active Army looks to reduce end strength, seasoned talented mid-career Soldiers will be available as they transition from active duty. The aim is to retain this experience through continued service in the reserve component.³⁸ Opportunities exist now to selectively fill these IMA positions from this candidate pool. Although *AR 140-145* does state that this recruitment option is available, HRC maintains that there is no mechanism for an active duty soldier to transfer to the IMA program and require the Soldier to transfer to the IRR first.³⁹ This administrative procedure adds complexity to an already challenging situation of leaving active service and can be confusing enough to preclude Soldiers from choosing this option.

Other service components have demonstrated success with recruiting service members leaving the AC. The Air Force maintains 13,000 IMA positions and recruits successfully from airmen leaving active duty. Colonel Nancy Zbyszinski, commander of the Readiness Management Group (RMG), encourages airmen leaving active duty to consider being an IMA, strategically communicating the positive aspects of flexibility,

location, and roles.⁴⁰ The Marines have demonstrated a similar success. The intelligence community actively recruits intelligence Marines leaving AC to fill vacancies in the IMA intelligence positions and have instituted “aggressive campaigns to identify Marines for lateral moves into the intelligence field in the IMA.”⁴¹ Both these services have found strength in fully integrating IMAs into the operations of the AC and success in recruitment directly from service members exiting active duty. The Army should adopt a coordinated effort at all active duty transition points to recruit talented Soldiers directly into IMA positions. This transition should appear seamless to the Soldier.

The IMA program could also recruit from Soldiers who are selected for promotion. Promotable Soldiers often need to seek out positions commensurate with their new rank to obtain their promotion. Active recruitment targeting these lists could yield high quality talent to fill these career broadening assignments and demonstrate proactive career management for top talent. Many RC Soldiers are unaware of the IMA according to the program manager at HRC; therefore, the IMA program would need to actively seek out potential matches for IMA vacancies from these promotion lists and educate them on the program to recruit them.⁴² Since these Soldiers’ military records would have been updated for the promotion board, complete information would be easily accessible to know if these eligible Soldiers would have the knowledge and experiences to be a good fit for open positions.

Recruitment for positions has to be realistic, however. Many positions are chronically vacant. Although HRC was unable to provide the author with exact number, they did confirm the problem and provided an example that one third of the 850 U.S. Army Medical Command (MEDCOM) IMA billets remain chronically unfilled.⁴³ Proponent

“agencies establish IMA authorizations with unrealistic expectations for fill, or the proverbial ‘wish’ list.”⁴⁴ Positions that are unfilled for an extended period of time should be reviewed for viability for fill based on the inventory of human capital in the Army Reserve in general. This procedure should be added to the procedure for position validation at the HQDA G-3/5/7 and the Joint Manpower Validation Board. Since IMA positions are a small, valuable resource, this board should reallocate positions that chronically cannot be filled due to a lack of those personnel resources in the RC inventory to other requested positions. This would be mutually beneficial. It would provide vacancies that the RC could fill and provide support to the AC. It may also facilitate providing more joint and career broadening position to the RC forces to promote leadership growth and experiences.

In order to recruit into any position, an updated position management document is required. Although a vacancy list is currently accessible on the HRC website, it is not current. In assessing every position, over 10- 20% were actually unavailable for fill according to the point of contact at the proponent agency. The main reasons provided by the point of contacts were position elimination, position change, or position filled. Regardless of the reasons, however, this is a symptom of a lack of programmatic leadership. The program should be reorganized under a leader that will proactively seek an understanding of vacancies and establish fill targets to encourage vitality in the IMA program. This concept is detailed below. A reorganization effort, together with a comprehensive communication plan to improve the awareness of the program, affects not only recruitment but selection and sustainment as well.

Selection

Selection is the second area of concern contributing to the vacancies in the IMA program. Selection is a lengthy process with the categorizing of positions contributing to this challenge. There are two types of IMA assignments, nominative and non-nominative. Currently, 77% of the billets are nominative.⁴⁵ *AR 140-145* lists all positions within “OSD, OJCS, the Office of the Secretary of the Army, the Army Staff, FEMA, Inspector General, chaplains, U.S. Army Medical Command, and TJAG [as] nominative” but goes on to further specify that proponents can request other positions through the DSC, G-1.⁴⁶ Defense policy is silent on this matter.⁴⁷ The Chief of the Reserve Proponent Personnel Branch, G-3, at HRC shared that nominative are the hardest to fill because the proponent unit often repetitively turns down candidates even though they appear to meet all the criteria listed on the vacancy spreadsheet.⁴⁸ This creates additional workload to provide numerous nominee packets and lengthens the timeline to fill a position.

The purpose of the nominative process is to ensure that gaining commanders have a voice in selecting those Soldiers who they feel best fit the needs of the organization. The nominative procedure creates additional workload for HRC to prepare these candidate packets and requires workload on the part of the proponent agency to read through potentially multiple packets of candidates of which they know none. If the purpose is to create a good fit, procedures could be developed to create a more efficient process and have an excellent output.

A suggested course of action to be more efficient and garner desirable outcomes would be to have a detailed position requirement sheet. This detailed vacancy announcement would assist Soldiers with self-selecting positions with which they are

qualified. Currently, the vacancy spreadsheet only lists location, MOS, drill status, and security clearance.⁴⁹ A clear and comprehensive list of qualifications would aid in appropriate assignment selection. Once developed, most IMA vacancies could be classified as non-nominative and filled in the same manner as other vacant positions. Soldiers who meet all the detailed criteria for the billet should be assigned the position without refusal of the proponent agency. This determination of fit should be done by personnel familiar with the needs of that branch and/or assignment. This staff would be responsible for carefully looking at potential candidate qualifications and comparing them to the detailed requirements of the opening. If positions are clearly defined and qualified candidates are selected, only key, select positions should be categorized as nominative, such as O-6 positions, and require a proponent unit interview. Requirements for a position to be nominative should mirror the requirements that the AC has on like positions on their Table of Distribution and Allowances (TDA). This new selection process would require a request to change AR 140-145 through the Deputy Chief of Staff, G-1.

A clear marketing and communication is required to give visibility of IMA program opportunities and position vacancies to all Soldiers, active and reserve. Creating competition for these few positions will grow the quality of the candidates seeking career expanding opportunities. An improved administrative structure with a comprehensive communication and marketing plan will assist the selection as much as it will improve recruitment and sustainment.

Sustainment and Rotation

Of the 2,733 filled IMA positions, 175 positions are past their four years in the position and approximately 100 are non-deployable. This means that 10% of the IMA

positions are filled with Soldiers who no longer meet the criteria to hold the position.⁵⁰ *AR 140-145* states that HRC is responsible to coordinate the assignment of IMA Soldiers and “coordinate the reassignment of IMA Soldiers after four years of service with the proponent agency for appropriate career enhancement /professional development purposes.”⁵¹ HRC reports that because the program is under- strength, they do not interpret this as a defined term limit; therefore, there is no emphasis on rotating Soldiers out of positions.⁵² Currently, HRC relies on the proponent agency or the Soldier to bring other non-deployability information forward and sees this portion of readiness as a unit issue.⁵³ Together both of these situations complicate the ability of talented Soldiers to enhance their career progression in these IMA positions.

The IMA program needs to employ a course of action to address this sustainment and rotation issue to retain the best Soldiers in these positions. The functional manager of the IMA program responsible for personnel management should design procedures to pull this information routinely to maintain current data on the status of the forces in the program. The Secretary of the Army through the Deputy Chief of Staff G-1, the regulation proponent, would need to modify this policy to reflect this change in practice. In addition, the IMA program manager would need to modify the current business practices. To facilitate a unity of vision for the program, the IMA program management should be realigned to a centralized program instead of decentralized positions throughout the Officer Branch and Enlisted Branch as it is currently. This would improve the coordination process for the program and provide depth and backup to the individual program coordinators. The exact amount of staffing required could be initially surmised from the last manpower management review which

is determined on a two to five year cycle, with the optimal time period being every three years.⁵⁴

Besides a centralized management, the Marines and the Air Force have both employed sub-elements to provide further proactive control of the IMAs. IMAs who work in intelligence in the Marines have been formed into Intelligence Support Battalions (ISB), task-organized detachments of intelligence personnel to augment AC elements. This design allows intelligence assets to be better organized, trained, and equipped.⁵⁵ The Air Force also organized IMAs for better, more streamlined management and standardized training. Through common training assemblies (CTA), IMA collective training is assured in an efficient manner while developing camaraderie between IMAs.⁵⁶ Department of Defense policy and Army regulation allow for IMAs to be task organized into detachments for ease of management of training.⁵⁷ This structure provides leadership to these sub-elements and efficiently facilitates administrative processes and mandatory training efficiently and does not require changes to current policy.

The Army has employed these sub-elements in some places but the concept is not standardized. Developing this model for units with multiple IMAs utilizing standardized processes would positively impact the program by reducing the challenges of individual reserve Soldier requirements in an active component environment. An IMA detachment should be established for each Combatant Command, Major Army Command, Defense Agencies, non-DoD organizations, or other agencies with at least 20 IMAs. Standardizing this sub-element construct would place all of the individual reservists under an administrative umbrella to navigate the Army Reserve personnel

and pay systems. These administrative elements could be serviced by an Active Guard Reserve Soldier who understands the differences in the AC and RC pay and personnel systems and regulations. However, these IMA management detachments work most efficiently if they had a central place to plug into. Currently the standardization of these sub-elements does not exist, but is recommended as a programmatic redesign.

Recommended Unified Program Redesign

Gaps in recruitment, selection, and sustainment all share a common issue. The IMA program lacks of a unity of effort and command. This lack of unity contributes to a lack of clarity of strategic direction and vision and sends mixed signals in a disconnected communication effort. Addressing these elements positively impacts all aspects of the IMA program.

The primary cause of the lack of unity of effort and command is the underlying structure of the program. A designated entity needs to be responsible for making targeted goals in the active recruitment, assuring seamless selection, and proactively rotating assignments and the program success needs to be measured. Although HRC is responsible for recruitment as noted above, this element is decentralized; therefore, no cohesive groups is measured by the success for filling positions. HRC does not actively recruit for the IMA program.⁵⁸

Other services have developed mechanisms to improve the management of the program from which the Army can learn. The Air Force utilizes a split control of the IMA program with the major commands (MAJCOMs) responsible for operational control (OPCON) and the Air Force Reserve Command (AFRC) having ADCON.⁵⁹ Within the AFRC, the Readiness Management Group is responsible for the ADCON function and tracks the readiness of all IMAs. These responsibilities include all personnel actions,

training documentation, pay procedures, and coordination with proponent organizations for programmatic needs.⁶⁰ The Marines also specify that the Commander of Reserve Forces provides consolidated administrative support to all IMAs.⁶¹ The responsibilities of this Marine administrative support unit mirror that of the Air Force RMG. Both the Air Force and the Marines employ an administrative command structure that with similar responsibilities to ensure personnel readiness for their IMA program and should be employed in the Army as well.

Two policy options are offered to address this structural concern: realign the IMA program under the USARC or restructure it within HRC. Both options have benefits and drawbacks presented below.

Policy Option 1: Realign IMA Program under U.S. Army Reserve Command

The preferred policy option would be for the USARC to realign the IMA program to be managed by a reserve entity. An entity that has a similar structure and role is the Joint and Special Troops Support Command (JSTSC). IMA positions would remain under operational control (OPCON) to their proponent agency but under ADCON to this reserve unit. The JSTSC would be fully responsible for the recruitment, selection, and sustainment/rotation of these IMA positions. The JSTSC would then need to build working relationships with the functional commands to identify potential talented, qualified Soldiers, and facilitate their recruitment. The IMA positions should not be decentralized to these functional commands, however, because the mobilization tables of distribution and allowance (MOBTDA) change. This would create constant flux in the positions for which each entity is responsible. In addition, there would not be a clear entity to fill the branch immaterial positions. Last, it would diminish the unity of effort to drive this program.

This transition to management by USARC would require several major changes. First, it would require policy changes. Since Army regulation does clearly states that HRC is the functional manager of the IMA program, a request to change policy would need to be submitted to the Secretary of Defense through the policy proponent, Deputy Chief of Staff of the Army G-1.⁶² In addition, personnel would need to be designated to provide proactive attention to the IMA program to include building relationships with commands that are in different phases of recruitment as well as contacting IMA Soldiers to plan follow-on assignments. Since the JSTSC already provides command and control to specialized Army Reserve units and Army Reserve Elements (AREs) that provide operational support to combatant commands, this unit would be a logical fit to provide this administrative control to the IMA program.⁶³ IMA and ARE Soldiers both hold positions in these active component units. Although AREs and IMAs are different in how they are allocated, selected, and managed, they look the same from the AC perspective. A single responsible agent would lend administrative clarity for these major commands.

This concept would relocate the responsibility for administrative control from HRC to JSTSC, a functional command reporting directly to USARC. HRC would then be responsible for only minimal personnel procedures such as issuing orders for assignments. To accomplish this, all IMA positions would have to be mirrored as ARE positions for management and visibility on reserve systems. JSTSC would need to manually create and manage this document, generating additional workload and adding some risk of human error. Although this does add additional workload, it also adds benefits by creating visibility to recruiters and retention staff looking for open

opportunities for Soldiers. Currently these positions cannot be seen on reserve systems and are visible only on a manually produced Excel spreadsheet on the HRC website that, as noted above, does not accurately reflect current needs. Improved transparency of these IMA positions will improve recruitment and selection. This transition would require time and incur costs. It does, however, link the fiscal authority of the CAR with direct oversight of positions, selection, and assignment rotation.

Policy Option 2: Restructure IMA Program in HRC

A second option would be for HRC, as the current functional manager of the IMA program, to redesign their work to re-centralize their IMA program with a clear leadership structure, and reestablish a unity of effort, and create an improved vacancy document. This program redesign could be accomplished quicker and with less cost than moving the program, but it is not in direct control of USARC to make this transition happen. The Army Deputy Chief of Staff, G-1 would need to update *AR 140-145* to delineate this new structure. This solution does not fully address issues with selection and slotting, however, so it may not realize a significant improvement in the overall program administration. Although the IMA program is a reserve status program, it is managed by an AC unit for AC units. Without change, this continued structure would not address the issues of position visibility and control either; therefore, it is not the preferred solution.

Recruitment, selection, and sustainment/rotation issues all demonstrate a need for improved communication and marketing regarding opportunities in this program to both the AC and RC as well. Misperceptions still exist about the program and its function. The IMA program manager at HRC has identified this “lack of effective marketing and overall knowledge of the IMA program within the TPU/active component

population” as a limitation to recruitment.⁶⁴ The Chief of the Army Reserve identified this lack of knowledge of the program as a limiting factor for recruitment as well.⁶⁵ These comments present an intuitive analysis by leaders familiar with the program that demonstrates a need for a communication plan.

A clear and comprehensive communication and marketing effort needs to push information regarding the unique assignment opportunities, administrative program details, and current vacancies to both the AC and RC on a routine basis. Recruitment gaps point to a need for a comprehensive communication plan to educate current and prospective RC members to the IMA and the career broadening assignments available in this program as well as to the AC units that utilize these positions. Creating program awareness and competitiveness has the potential to lead to an improved fill rate with talented Soldiers and improve the ability to rotate these broadening assignments routinely. Program marketing could be accomplished through the electronic, print and social media platforms currently utilized by the Army. Examples include emails, posts on the Army Reserve and HRC websites, other social media sources such as Facebook and Twitter, and current Army print media. It should include nominative position upcoming boards, past position board results, routine posting of non-nominative positions with application procedures, and general information about the program and the career enhancing opportunities it affords.

Although opportunities for improvement of the IMA program exist in recruitment, selection, and sustainment, all of these elements are only symptoms of a larger issue. Challenges in this program, with key developmental career broadening assignments located in active component units, demonstrate that the vision of an operational,

interchangeable reserve component has not been cemented into the culture of the Army. Filling IMA positions with talented Soldiers for limited time frames in career enhancing roles is most important aspect to engineering a successful program but also helps to move the culture toward embracing the operational reserve force.

Culture Change

The *National Military Strategy* provides a goal oriented vision that states, “We must continue to utilize the Reserve Component ...in an operational capacity as a trained, equipped, ready and available force.”⁶⁶ This vision guides the organization to collectively reach a common goal. Although the strategic vision in the *National Military Strategy* specifies the need for the RC to be an accessible operational force, this concept has not been woven into the cultural fabric of the military. The Commission on the National Guard and Reserves indicated that “damaging cultural and structural divides exist between the active and reserve components.”⁶⁷ Although these cultural divides originate from historical vignettes of mistrust and misunderstanding, these misperceptions need to be overcome to create a seamless, cost-efficient, and optimal military force.⁶⁸ These continued cultural challenges are reflected in the lack of aggressive IMA recruitment, an overreliance on the nominative selection process, and lack of effort in rotating these positions by proponent agencies leading to sustainment/retention issues in the IMA program. As a program that bridges the AC and RC by RC Soldiers holding positions on AC MOBTDAAs, the IMA program is a perfect laboratory to explore the culture between the components. Together, these IMA program concerns demonstrate that the strategic direction of an operational reserve has not been inculcated into the culture of the Army.

Culture is shaped to support this vision by ensuring the organizational culture aligns with the future demands of the environment and ensuring the organizational values, as they relate to the vision, are communicated to build consensus to support the goals.⁶⁹ Leadership is key to accomplishing this evolution. “Culture is ultimately created, embedded, evolved, and ultimately manipulated by leaders.”⁷⁰ Leaders need to articulate, act, and embrace the change themselves to move the organization and efforts to move the culture need to start here. It is important for leaders from the top down to reframe their message to embrace an operational reserve and articulate the strategic importance. Vice Admiral John G. Cotton demonstrated this best by stating that the element that needed to be most urgently fixed in the sea service was the culture between the active and reserve forces, arguing that “as a nation we can no longer afford to have separate and unequal forces.”⁷¹ In an era of increasing budget concerns and military drawdown, this is increasingly true. He took a bold leadership role that needs to be emulated to move the culture.

Leaders not only create the culture, but develop the mechanisms to spread and sustain it throughout the organization. Culture shaping can be accomplished through embedding and reinforcing mechanisms.⁷² Embedding mechanisms directly influence the culture and are facts that leaders routinely observe and measure, allocate resources for, and reward, coach, and manage personnel toward.⁷³ By resourcing an IMA program structure with defined goals and measures, the IMA program can become an embedding mechanism for the culture of a fully operational reserve force. The IMA program is a measurable data point for this vision. It holds key assignments that are not only necessary for a fully trained and ready operational force, but are part of active

component MOBTDA. Embedding mechanisms that encourage the reserve component to be managed, coached, and rewarded in the same manner as their active component counterparts will move the culture. Leaders are crucial to setting and maintaining these same standards for the AC and RC.

Reinforcing mechanisms do not directly change the culture, but influence it indirectly and include the design of the organization, systems, rituals, facilities, stories, and organizational philosophies.⁷⁴ A common vision will not be successfully implemented without a unified internal culture that supports common values to achieve designated goals. Changing and unifying a culture is more difficult in mature organization, because secondary mechanisms are difficult to see and strong in perpetuating assumptions exist even when they are incorrect or contrary to a new vision.⁷⁵ Department of Defense has published their formal guidance in to attain this vision in DoD Directive 1200.17, *Managing the Reserve Component as an Operational Force*, and the Army recently further defined their service's role in Army Directive 2012-08, *Total Force Policy*.⁷⁶ Besides communication through these publications, repetitive communication and marketing is not only a reinforcing mechanism for the vision of an operational reserve, but is a key component to improve the IMA program. Communication need to not only include formal messages in a variety of media formats, but should be incorporated in informal communication and stories leaders tell.

Cultural change is sustained through continued leadership efforts including articulating the vision and shaping the culture toward the organizational change strategy. Not only does communication need to be multi-formatted and repetitive, but also needs to be communicated through actions. Consistent messaging in word and

deed stimulates people to work collectively toward the transformational initiative.⁷⁷

Anchoring is the last stage of any organizational reengineering and grounds the changes in the organizational culture and helps to make them stick.⁷⁸ Anchoring consists of consistent strategic communication, consistent action, and noted gains to exploit for further change.⁷⁹ Army leadership should apply these principles to rectify the gaps in the IMA program and promote a seamless, operational force.

Throughout the process of anchoring the vision in the culture, leaders must scan the environment for barriers to change to remove them. Issues in the IMA program demonstrate barriers that must be addressed to further anchor the vision of an operational reserve force in the culture of the Army. Other topics that impact this vision include the complicated personnel and pay system of the RC and the ability to move easily between the reserve and active component and provide opportunities for future research.

Recommendations for Future Research

The IMA program impacts on other strategies that contribute to a fully operational reserve force as well. These include Total Force and Soldier for Life initiatives. Emphasis on improving the IMA program function may also positively impact these policies in the Army. This interconnectedness between these programs provides topics for research in the future.

One of the major problems of the DIMA program, as it is currently configured, is that it supplies individual Soldiers to parent AC units without a structured RC chain of command. There are no commanders of DIMAs as they are not organized as units. Nor do DIMA positions come with full-time support on the base active duty table of distribution of allowances where Active/Guard and Reserve authorizations are

documented. Therefore, active duty parent commanders tend to assign management of the DIMAs to the senior reserve officer at the installation who has many other duties and is not staffed to perform these functions. This problem is richly deserving of further research.

The Army Total Force Policy of September 2012 states that not only will the Army will integrate AC and RC forces at the tactical level but that standards for qualifications for educational and professional development will be the same between the AC and RC.⁸⁰ The IMA program holds key RC assignments to fulfill this vision that support and integrate in joint staff assignments. These IMA positions also have the ability to facilitate individual RC working relations and cultivate confidence with their AC counterparts. These elements are essential to building confidence in a fully operational reserve force.

To realize success with Total Force Policy, the directive notes that “integrated personnel and pay systems that standardize business practices for both the AC and RC are vital to maintaining secure and accurate data.”⁸¹ Currently, the RC uses a different set of personnel systems and 29 pay categories compared to the simplistic active component categorization. These RC pay categories are confusing to the parent AC commands that sometimes have more than one category of RC Soldier working side by side on different pay statuses such as individual duty for training (IDT) or annual training (AT). These pay statuses dictate other benefits such as travel and housing. Streamlining personnel systems and pay categories and to a unified system for both AC and RC forces will not only realize efficiencies to contribute to the Total Force

concept, but also simplify the administrative concerns that the active component faces in managing RC forces in IMA positions.

As the elements of Army Total Force Policy are operationalized, further investigation is encouraged to explore its effects on the IMA program. More importantly, future research should survey the military climate to discover any impact the changes resulting from the Total Force Policy had on the vision of a fully operational reserve force.

The IMA program has a potential to facilitate the Soldier for Life concept as well. It can provide Soldiers with the opportunity to move more easily, in either direction, between the Reserve and Active components.⁸² This strategy views the AC and RC as two elements of valuable service, full-time and part-time, that a qualified individual can move between as mutually beneficial to the military and the Soldier. It recognizes the cost of accessioning and training service members and seeks to avoid unnecessary replication of those costs by promoting transition “between active and reserve service in ways that meet the needs of national defense and are consistent with the practical realities of the service member’s individual, family and personal obligations.”⁸³

The IMA program could offer key assignment opportunities necessary to implement this policy. Theoretically, Soldiers who desire to transition from an active position could utilize their talent, education, and training, in an open IMA billet that they are competent to fill. Conversely, a Soldier that has experienced key career broadening assignments as an IMA may possess the knowledge, skills, and abilities to transition to a full time AC commitment if they desire and as the needs of the Army dictate. Both these scenarios that retain talent and meet the Soldier’s personal needs, vacancies

permitting, would be a fiscally responsible endeavor for the Army by retaining excellent Soldiers with whom the Army has already invested time, money, and training.

In order to be fiscally responsible and take advantage of retaining our best trained Soldiers during times of contraction, allowing and creating an environment and a culture that permits a person to be a Soldier for Life is going to be even more important.⁸⁴ Success of this policy and the ability to move seamlessly between components will require changes in policy that govern pay retirement and personnel systems. The potential for synergy between the IMA program and the Soldier for Life initiatives is a topic for future research.

Conclusion

The IMA program supports active component units with trained, specialized Soldiers in unique career broadening and joint assignments not found in troop program units necessary to sustain an operational reserve force. “The Reserve Component is essential as it provides strategic and operational depth to the joint force...We must continue to utilize the Reserve component in an operational capacity as a trained, equipped, ready, and available force.”⁸⁵ The National Security Strategy, Quadrennial Defense Review, and National Military Strategy align to clearly delineate this vision for an operational interchangeable RC. This effort not only prepares the U.S. for national security challenges, it accomplishes it in a fiscally prudent manner. Effective use of an operational reserve force lowers overall personnel and operating costs while ensuring the right mix and availability defense assets.⁸⁶

The IMA program holds the key career broadening and joint assignments necessary to accomplish this vision. Although there are only 4,000 unique, career enhancing positions in this program, the program is currently at only 54% strength. This

program has challenges in the recruitment, selection, and rotation processes that contribute to this concern. Specific alterations to the administration of the program can offer some solutions. Other branches of the military have identified answers to some of these issues from which the Army can learn.

Two overarching solutions that transcend the recruitment, selection, and sustainment/rotation issues of the IMA program include a complete structural redesign of the oversight and management of the program itself and a concerted communication plan to educate both the AC and RC on the key aspects of the IMA program. Recommendations include consolidating the program with clear oversight and designing both a push and pull communication effort utilizing current print, electronic, and social media. These changes will realize improvements in all facets of the program.

Problems in the IMA program point to a bigger issue, though. Since the program is an operational link to the strategic vision of a fully operational reserve force, these issues point to the fact that this concept has not been inculcated into the culture of the Army. Continued effort is needed to enculturate an operational reserve force into the Army through reinforcing and embedding efforts.

A key intermediate measure of progress in this culture change is a healthy IMA program. Through addressing the IMA program's structure and developing a comprehensive communication and marketing plan, improvements in the IMA program can be realized. Other programs that impact this culture change are topics for future research. A strong IMA program will contribute to weaving an operational reserve into the cultural fabric and operational success of the Army.

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